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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a critique of western culture's use and abuse of scholarly traditions and activities through secularization. The paper argues that scholarly activity is connected to forms that tend to function as "religion" and that modern academe refuses to acknowledge the forms as a kind of secular religion, thereby promoting a subtle self-deception. The paper expands on this thesis by developing a definition of religion as a system of basic beliefs which constitute a formative world view, a psychological commitment by an individual or community of supportive believers to this belief, a pattern of moral practice resulting from adherence to this belief, and an ethic which provides a means toward ultimate transformation. Further it is argued that this definition includes equally traditional religions and secular belief systems that function as religions. The paper goes on to look at universities as they function as "religious centers" and to analyze belief systems as scholarly traditions. A concluding section argues that academic disciplines have assumed the role of religion in the lives of modernists and post modernists and that the modern sects now dominate the public power structure through schools and professional organizations. (Contains 41 references.) (JB)

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The Scholarly Atmosphere: A Magnificent Deception?

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The Scholarly Atmosphere: A Magnificent Deception?

Neil J. Flinders

An organism which grows and dies in a given environment is influenced by the existing atmosphere. Conditions external to it may determine whether it thrives, struggles, or fails to develop in a normal way. Intellectual as well as biological life is subject to atmosphere. Because external conditions may nourish or kill it, any serious examination of human intellectual activity in general and of education in particular requires some analysis of the surrounding atmosphere or climate. This exploration is simply a matter of attending to the ecology of education; it is a philosophical necessity, a prerequiste to an effectve examination of academic endeavors.

Educators have long believed that a supportive *atmosphere of scholarship* is essential for true education to flourish. I believe this premise is accurate; education devoid of trustworthy scholarship is faulty education. There is a discipline associated with productive seeking, learning and sharing of knowledge.

But "scholarship" is more than using procedures and tools to search and research, examine and create, analyze and synthesize, ponder and appreciate. Scholarship is also a mindset that is shaped and driven by personal intentions, commitments, and allegiances; it is an activity that is driven by some mental "order" or paradigm, often involving deep emotional considerations. These two domains, the academic procedures and the dominant mental paradigm, generate the atmosphere in which learning and teaching occur.

In a previous paper I outlined three major traditions of scholarship; the *philosophic or scientific tradition* (the study of man's relationship to things), *the oratorical tradition* (the study of man's relationship to man), and *the faithful tradition* (the study of man's relationship to God). I also suggested that as scholarly traditions take on the aura of a religion they may generate distortions that obstruct an individual's search for happiness.[1]

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[1]see N. J. Flinders "Scholarship: Time for a Redefinition" *Proceedings of the Far Western Philosophy of Education Society*, 1991, for an explanation of three different traditions of scholarship.

A possible cause of such distortion is the failure to acknowledge belief systems as religions when they function as religion. The result is a form of pollution in the academic atmosphere; it is a hole in the intellectual ozone. In this paper I call attention to the way western culture has abused the scholarly atmosphere through an abusive and deceptive use of secularization, sometimes called the *secularization hypothesis*.

Scholarship as a Form of Religion

Scholarly activity is not embedded in neutral belief systems as some have supposed. This lack of neutrality is clearly evident in the *secularization hypothesis*, of which the underlying assumption is that "society moves from some sacred condition to successively secular conditions in which the sacred evermore recedes."[2] It seems curious if not ominous for a society to propose, promote, and celebrate the death of the sacred order--particularly when the chief morticians are gifted and privileged members of the scholarly community.

This notion, popularized by theorists like "Marx, James, Durkheim, Freud, Malinowski, and H. R. Niebuhr," has significantly influenced modern social, legal, and political thought. But it is now a thesis enveloped in turmoil. A flurry of confusion is apparent and some writers are striving to resolve the dilemma by word definitions. Phillip E. Hammond, for example, reports: "the scientific study of religion has been shaken to its roots" and "the secularization thesis--as traditionally understood--is not sufficient to allow us to understand why."[3] Hammond's book illustrates some of the linguistic distinctions that writers are making to preserve the secularization hypothesis.

I do not believe, however, that making finelined distinctions between terms like "sacred" and "religious" and between "secularization" and "secularism" resolves the problem. A more appropriate answer to Hammond's concern is to understand both "secularization" and "secularism" as being essentially religious in nature (albeit nonconventional). Combattants commonly ignore the fact that almost any scholarly activity is connected to forms that tend

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[2]Philip E. Hammond (editor) *The Sacred in a Secular Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) p. 1.
[3]Ibid. pp. 2-3.

to function as "religion." This fact does not change because debators call these forms secular and refuse to acknowledge them as religious. Mislabelling simply promotes a subtle form of self-deception.

From its beginning scholarship has been a craft in the service of some *venerated order.* Numerous writers have recognized and recorded this perspective. Considering the evidence, it is rather amazing that scholarly activity and the communities generated by it are not perceived as religious activities and organizations. But in western culture they are not and this is the root of the difficulty.

If the authorities who describe the sociality of scholarship as religious activity are correct, and I believe they are, this viewpoint helps to explain much of the intellectual turmoil in our society. The intensity of conflicts over alternative lifestyles, sexual preference, definition of family, censorship, environmentalism, academic freedom, etc. can be more easily understood when they are viewed as expressions of divergent religious belief systems. Recognizing these belief systems as religions also levels the playing field. Social and academic diversities are more honest, and their competitions are more fair when modern *secular belief systems* have to play by the same legal and cultural rules as the traditional *religious belief systems.*

It is apparent that a major incentive exists for not calling the secular a religion. But this incentive needs to be exposed; it needs to be better understood.

Historical distortion is more evident when one examines the emergence of secularism in terms of a belief system separate from but comparable to traditional religion. Many of those most closely associated with the secularization of scholarship did view it in this way. For example, Georgio de Santillana refers to the early Greek forms of science as "scientific religions" and implies that conflicts would be natural between such religions.[4] This may explain why later "sciences" have considered departures from their doctrines as *heresies.*

Karl Popper carries the theme to our day when he notes that modern science originated as "a religious or semi-religious movement

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[4]Georgio de Santillana The Origins of Scientific Thought: From Anaximander to Proclus, 600 B. C.--500 A. D. (New York: Mentor, 1961) pp. 285-286.

and Bacon was [its] prophet."[5] John Dewey agreed, observing that whatever "concerns the spirit and atmosphere of the pursuit of knowledge, Bacon may be taken as the prophet of a pragmatic conception of knowledge." Dewey also argued that if scholars would carefully observe and follow this prophet "many misconceptions of [the] spirit . . . and the end of knowledge" would be avoided.[6] The common doctrine in the new religion was what Bacon and Dewey identified as the "social factor." This factor attributes the origin of all acceptable knowledge to man. Herein lies the uniqueness of *secular religion*.

August Comte's writings, as Robert Nisbet indicates, portray how the "reigning scientists have become priests in name and fact." Under the banner "the Religion of Humanity," society became the new "Grand Being;" exactly what Christianity had been for those of the Middle Ages. In Comte's vision the new religion was to "forever replace in mankind's consciousness all earlier and false deities."[7] It was his conviction that humanity "scientifically defined, . . . is the truly Supreme Being."[8] John Dewey agreed. In his articulation of "A Common Faith," he carefully explains "another conception of the nature of the religious phase of experience." The new explanation puts man in the center and eliminates any "necessity for a Supernatural Being and for an immortality that is beyond the power of nature."[9]

This perspective gives an added dimension to Ernest Boyer's recent claim that in order for "America's colleges and universities to remain vital" they must develop "a new vision of scholarship."[10] Boyer's injunction becomes a call to religious service, but service to what religious order? This appears to be a critical question.

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[5]Karl R. Popper "Science: Problems, Aims, Responsibilities" *Federation Proceedings* (Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology) Supplement no. 13, vol. 22, March-December, 1963. p. 961.

[6]John Dewey *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948) p.38

[7]Robert Nisbet *The Social Philosophers* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell and Co., 1973) pp. 239-240.

[8]August Comte *A General View of Positivism, from European Philosophies: From Descartes to Nietzche*, (New York: Modern Library, 1960) p.755.

[9]John Dewey *A Common Faith* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1934) pp. 1-2.

[10]Ernest Boyer

It is my assertion that practictioners of scholarship, knowingly or unknowingly, are in fact disciples of something, and the nature of that something often requires a commitment of a religious form and intensity. Scholarship is not merely a collection of tools to use in searching for understanding and wisdom; invariably scholarly activity becomes an instrument of some existing paradigm--a belief system that governs its application. Sometimes "scholars, scientists, or philosophers" admit their discipleship and describe the "world picture" to which they are committed, and sometimes they intentionally hide it. "But in the majority of men," states W. C. Stace, "it works unseen, a dim background in their minds, unnoticed by themselves because [it is] taken for granted."[11] Nevertheless, commitment to these belief systems as Thomas Kuhn observes is the result of a "conversion experience"[12]--not just willful adherence to an objective accumulation of fact.

The Problem

The problem is hard to discern but easy to comprehend: Scholarship is entangled in a magnificent deception; quietly generation after generation is led into mindsets that function as religious orders without their being recognized as such. This deception promotes neither good scholarship nor good religion; it nurtures social, legal, and political confusion and conflict. And in its wake the nature and the purpose of education are changed.

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz argues that the heart of religion "is the conviction that the values one holds are grounded in an inherent structure of reality."[13] Modern expressions of scholarship make the same claim. Einstein's statement that "belief in an external world, independent of the perceiving subject, is the basis of all natural science" and Michael Polanyi's assertion that "science or scholarship can never be more than an affirmation of the things we believe in" illustrate this point. Faith founded in "*ultimate beliefs* [that] are irrefutable and unprovable" is the common foundation of both

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[11]W. T. Stace *Religion and the Modern Mind* (New York: J. P. Lippincott, 1960) p. 10

[12]Philip E. Hammond (editor) *The Sacred in a Secular Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) p. 105.

[13]see full discussion in Clifford Geertz *Islam Observed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968)

religious and scholarly traditions.[14] Neither religion nor scholarship can exist without faith in such presuppositions.

Basic Thesis

With the perspective of this biography of scholarship I present the thesis that *all varieties of scholarship are in fact forms of religious expression.*

In approaching this thesis it is important to discern clearly between the tools of scholarship and the *belief system* or *tradition* that drives the person using those tools. Scholarly tools can and should be viewed as instruments of service, subject to a belief system which provides the context for their use. What should not be ignored is that the "belief system" is inevitably a "religious" order--regardless of the language one might use to describe it.

An implication of this thesis is that scholars are very susceptable to the practical problems associated with serving two or more masters. A person may be adept in applying the tools of scholarship, but *ultimately* this application will serve some "religious order," the one to which the scholar grants the greatest allegiance. "Truth in scholarship" includes full disclosure of the *driving order* as well as the procedures and outcomes of scholarly endeavors. But this is not how academia presently operates; it has enclosed itself within a bastion called seclurism. The popular assumption is that academic procedures and outcomes are independent of *religious* commitments. I do not believe this is true or defensible.

Religion Defined

This paper is based on a view of religion which includes four components: (1) a system of basic or ultimate beliefs which constitute a formative world view, (2) a psychological commitment by an individual or a community of mutually supportive believers to this belief, (3) a pattern of moral practice resulting from adherence

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[14]Thomas F. Torrance *Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing Co., 1984) pp. 193-195.

to this belief, and (4) an ethic which provides "a means toward ultimate transformation."[15]

Transformation is a compelling human quest; it is the core of intentional experience. Defining religion in terms of the striving for transformation is inclusive rather than exclusive, conferring honor equally on traditional religions and on "secular belief systems" that function as religions. R. N. Proctor draws attention to this likeness when he observes that modern academic theory tends to be "a kind of secular theodicy." Most modern social theory evolved from religious concerns; it reflects religion-like suppositions and, as Proctor indicates, "has been subject to the charge of theodicy."[16]

The University as a Religious Center

All universities, in addition to housing the tools of scholarship, function as religious solariums where devotees of selected orders and potential members for these "sacred" orders gather together in a clustered if not cloistered community. These are individuals dedicated to or in search of some means of transformation, whether it be actualization, recognition, certification, graduation or some other academic symbol or process. The search, when dutifully followed, results in subtle or overt commitments that invite the scholar to give singular recognition to a particular mental paradigm accepted by the community.

According to this pattern, a university sponsored by the Catholic religion may expect its scholars to apply their scholarly tools for the benefit of the Catholic church. However, a scholar in that university may experience greater loyalty to the governing paradigm of a

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[15] Frederick J. Strong et. al. *Ways of Being Religious* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1973) p. 6. A discussion of definitions for religion is offered by William B. Williamson who concludes that five criteria may apply in defining religion. He offers as a universal definition the following: "Religion is the acceptance of a belief or a set of beliefs that exceed mundane matters and concerns; the commitment to a morality or the involvement in a lifestyle resulting from those beliefs; and the psychological conviction which motivates the relation of belief and morality in everyday living and consistent behavior." see pp. 30-31 of *Decisions in Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1984). A legal definition of religion is offered in U. of Chicago Law Review 533, 550-51 (1965).

[16] Robert N. Proctor *Value-Free Science?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991) pp. 135-136.

particular discipline, society, or "secular order" than to the church. David W. Lutz portrays such a conflict at Notre Dame University as "a battle for the soul of the university" with "the Catholic character of the University" at stake. Lutz, a non-Catholic professor at Notre Dame, sees the battle as "between traditional Christians and people whose world view is rooted primarily in the Enlightenment," those who have embraced "the post-enlightenment, nontheistic faith" that Justice Hugo Black called "secular humanism."[17]

Based on the thesis of this paper, I would designate the problem Lutz describes not as a struggle between religion and nonreligion, but as a contest between two religions--or "churches"--a *traditional* church and an *academic* church. The process underway among the professoriate is the process of determining which of these "churches" is going to command their primary loyalty--the choice can be significant.

Characteristically, academic work is ritual work in the service of some belief system--overtly or covertly. All scholarship is linked to suppositions that are related to some "religion" or "church." J. J. Cohen compellingly demonstrates the "absurdity of trying to pin 'religion' down to a single theology or a single institutional form."[18] And William B. Williamson clearly demonstrates the artificial nature of dividing modern "isms" into religious and non-religious categories. "Man's religious beliefs are expressed in many forms," Williamson says; he then proceeds to list a range of these expressions--"traditional theism; ethical theism; limited theism; existentialism; the 'end of theism'; naturalism; humanism; pantheism; agnosticism; and atheism."[19]

Another valid and useful list of religious forms could include the various curricular disciplines in which students become disciples --beginning with *anthropology* and ending with *zoology*. Those who have observed the zealous defense of organic evolution in the face of challenges put forward by creationists or the application of the doctrine of free speech to protect art forms and literature that are

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[17]David W. Lutz "Can Notre Dame Be Saved?" *First Things*, pp. 35-40.
[18]Steven M. Cahn (ed.) *Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1970) p. 391.
[19]William B. Williamson *Decisions in Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1984) p. 161.

challenged as being pornographic may recognize the deeply religious nature of individual commitments on both sides of these debates.

But this "religious" conflict is not limited to modern vs. traditional views, it is waged with similar intensity between the academic sects. In spite of academic ecumenism the deep division of "turf" is familiar to those who have attempted any form of interdisciplinary fusion. The commitments and allegiences that continue to separate the disciplines can be interpreted as manifestations of religious ardor as real as those that characterize a Southern Baptist revival, a Latter-day Saint conference, or Ecumenical councils.

This religious zeal and sense of congregational community extends beyond the scholarly domain and is manifest in political parties, the press corps, unions, legal and medical professions, and other organizations that function as *religion* for many of those in their respective memberships. The experience for individual participants is as real in public life today as it was in Athens for Paul, the Christian apostle, who was invited to the press conference on Mars Hill by the Stoics and the Epicureans. The experience is very personal.

For each scholar or consumer of academic scholarship, a question emerges: What "religion" or "church" sponsored this work? To correctly understand an act, insight, or condition, one must understand the motive behind it. Each scholar's fundamental allegiance, loyalty, and commitment resides in some "church"; and the scholar, like the laborer, cannot serve two masters equally. One may not agree with John Dewey who prescribed faith in science as the way to acquire beliefs as well as the "method of changing beliefs." But he was open in declaring that for him "supreme loyalty" was to be vested in the "method" as perceived through his particular paradigm.[20] Although such commitment may not significantly affect every product of scholarship, the potential for it to do so should be explicitly acknowledged.

To be academically "honest," the scholar should disclose the religious commitment behind the act or treatise of scholarship. For example, it is fair and appropriate for you to know that I am presenting this paper from the point of view of a believer in a

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[20]John Dewey *A Common Faith* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1934) pp. 38-39.

supernatural as well as a natural domain--as a committed and practicing member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The belief system that drives my use of the scholarly tools and procedures is not neutral. I trust that this application is fair, honest, and open to scrutiny, but I do not claim it deserves special treatment under the doctrine of *secular neutrality*--there is no such thing.

As philosophers of education recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the various tools of scholarship--such as guileless inquiry, disciplined reason, honest search and research, meticulous record keeping, limited scope, subjective interpretation etc.--they should also have the courage to identify and anticipate the influence of the religious order that governs the individual who uses those tools. When this responsibility is ignored, youth may be unwittingly absorbed into "religious orders" of which they are not aware and to which they may not wish to commit.

Religion as Belief Systems and Belief Systems as Scholarly Tradition

Characteristics common to such recognized religions as Judaism, Christianity, Islam or Hinduism are clearly discernable in their literature and in the behavior of the respective disciples. And the same general characteristics are equally self evident in the literature and disciples of physical science, social science, linguistics, law, medicine, and other forms of scholarship. These parallel orders display similar if not identical elements; robes, rituals, sacrifices, rites of entry and levels of priestly authority.

Both religion and scholarship strive for harmony and promote personal encounter; both seek creative interaction and sensuous experience; both are characterized by rewards, punishments and elements of mysticism. Likewise, they share a hunger for rebirth, devotion to community, and conformity to cosmic law. They seek freedom through discipleship, self-integration, achieving human rights. They strive to conquer inadequacy, to achieve the abundant life. The experience of a committed graduate student and a novitiate in any of the traditional religious orders are very similar. The focus and sacrifice, submission and performance, obstacles and language, ceremonies and rewards are common components. And the places assigned in the resulting heirarchy reflect a shared pattern.

Scholarly activities can and indeed do reflect religious orders. These orders build houses in which to worship, promote mandated liturgies, and initiate prospective members. August Comte clearly

reflected the religious nature of scholarly traditions when he announced: "Thus positivism becomes, in the true sense of the word, Religion; the only religion which is real and complete; destined to replace all imperfect and provisional systems resting on the primitive basis of theology."[21] Every scholar who cherishes his/her membership in some religion of the conventional sort will at some time have to choose between a fundamental allegiance to that conventional religion or to some academic religion that would seek to supplant it.

The confrontation must eventually come--as it did for Charles Darwin (to the deep-felt dismay of his wife Emma, who feared for his soul and said she "would be most unhappy if I thought we did not belong to each other for ever.") Early in his life Darwin admitted being a "quite orthodox" Christian. However as time passed, he said, "I found it more and more difficult, with free scope given to my imagination, to invent evidence which would suffice to convince me. Thus disbelief crept over me at a very slow rate, but it was at last complete." He described how "the old argument of design in nature, as given by Paley" failed "now that the law of natural selection has been discovered." Darwin's new "theology" changed his thinking and his former comittment. "I can indeed hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true," he said; it "is a damnable doctrine."[22] Darwin rejected one religion to embrace another.

Julian Huxley described academic religion as "religion without revelation" and declared, "The god hypothesis has ceased to be scientifically tenable, has lost its explanatory value and is becoming an intellectual and moral burden to our thought." He testified of the enormous "sense of spiritual relief which comes from rejecting the idea of God as a superhuman being."[23] Huxley, like Darwin, Watson, Dewey and many others agreed that the new intellectual order required new doctrines. As Albert Einstein concluded: "In their

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[21]August Comte *A General View of Positivism, from European Philosophies: From Descartes to Nietzche*, (New York: Modern Library, 1960) p.753.

[22]Nora Barlow *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1958) pp. 237, 86-87.

[23]Julian Huxley *Religion Without Revelation* (London: C. A. Watts & Co., 1967) p. 2-4.

struggle for the ethical good, teachers of religion must have the stature to give up the doctrine of a personal God."[24]

Huxley elaborated other doctrinal changes, among them "new religious terminology and reformulations of religious ideas and concepts" adopted by the modern world of scholarship. He noted that the idea of "eternity" was replaced with "enduring process," the concept of "salvation" with "attaining . . . satisfying states of inner being," and the idea of "prayer" with "aspiration and self-exploration." Huxley maintained, "There is no room for petitionary prayer," because there is no personality to petition. Rather, society is to "enlist the aid of psychologists and psychiatrists in helping men and women to explore the depths and heights of their own inner selves instead of restlessly pursuing external novelty."[25]

Emile Durkheim extended the explanation of religious order and, like Comte, identified its source as society--any society. Everything, according to Durkheim, that conforms to the conventions of society is made holy. Public sanction is the power that makes things sacred.[26] Carl A. Raschke et. al. argue that whatever "composes a universe in which the supreme values and goals of a particular community of individuals are transformed into real elements of cosmic order" constitutes a religion.[27] The U. S. Supreme Court has tended to agree, defining religion as a belief system or world view with or without reference to God.[28]

A Day of Many Churches

Thus one could conclude, that any definitive perspective or belief system that (1) conveys a description of reality, (2) offers evidence for the validity of that description, and (3) reflects some pattern of "moral" beliefs and (4) provides skills and tools for survival within the scope of such reality may function as a religion in a person's life.

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[24]Albert *Einstein Out of My Later Years* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950) see pp. 29-33 for expanded discussion.

[25]Julian Huxley *Religion Without Revelation* (London: C. A. Watts & Co., 1967) pp. 6-7.

[26]Emile Durkheim *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Collier Books, 1961) p. 245.

[27]Carl A. Raschke et. al. *Ways of Being Religious* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentic-Hall Inc., 1973) p. 6.

[28]See *Torcaso v. Watkins* 367 U.S. 488,495, n. 11 (1961) and *Larkin v. Grendel's Den Inc.*, 459 U. S. 116, 121 (1982).

This pattern is evident in both ancient and modern times. With established requirements for membership and insistence upon offerings, all such "churches" or bodies of believers depend upon a continuous flow of adherents to survive. Hence, proselyts are recruited, trained, and empowered according to strategies created by those who govern the system. Many such "churches" have been built up in response to changing world views among humankind.

Students of western culture have noted the everchanging views that shape and seek to unify this society. Edward Harrison refers to this in his review of cosmology--the study of universes--in terms of masks. He suggests we see the past as a procession of these masks, a parade of rising and falling "cosmic belief-systems."[29] In his view we have come from a mythic past through Ionian, Pythagorean, and Aristotelian world-systems to a modern post-Newtonian world view: A captivating and colorful parade with an intoxicating *Mardi Gras* aura about it. Considered in this light, suggestions of modern, socially-indoctrinated "mass psychosis" are not as far-fetched as they otherwise might seem. Thus Ortega y Gasset describes the enigma of our society: "We do not know what is happening to us, and that is precisely what is happening to us--the fact of not knowing what is happening to us."[30]

Richard Weaver cautions observers to recognize that this parade of history is not necessarily a march of progress, although he admits that to suggest otherwise is highly unpopular. Weaver maintains that "it is extremely difficult today to get people in any number to see contrary implications." When "we ask people to even consider the possibility of decadence, we meet incredulity and resentment."[31] Such a response is very consistent with the dominent theology attributed to modern scholarship: Its adherents seek safety and power in their claim that scholarship is objective and value-free, not dependent on vulnerable presuppositions.

Whether we see regress or progress, however, one factor in these many studies is clearly evident: the autonomy that modern man has ascribed to himself. Whatever the theoretical framework (Marxist,

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[29]Edward Harrison *Masks of the Universe* (New York: Macmillan, 1985) p. 3.

[30]From *Man and Crises*, quoted in George Charles Roche III *The Bewildered Society* (N. Y.: Arlington House, 1972) p. 11.

[31]Richard M. Weaver *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965) pp. 10-11.

Freudian, Deweyian or some other) the conclusion within western thinking has been almost unanimous. As Weaver put it, "For four centuries every man has been not only his own priest but his own professor of ethics."[32] Consensus in the west appears to be that each person has the prerogative to walk in his own way, in the image of his own "god," which image is in the likeness of the worldview he or she constructs. The traditional objects of idolatry may have disappeared but the practice seems to be alive and well. Paige Smith describes some of the new altars: "presentism--that tireless lust for the new," "excessive specialization," "knowledge for its own sake," "relativism . . . equal importance or unimportance," and "finally . . . the brute fact of size, the disease of giantism."[33] There are others.

The alleged demise of traditional transcendental religion as an acknowledged core concept in modern western culture,[34] does not mean there has been a decline in religious orders. There is an abundance of "churches" that continue to cry "lo here," and "lo there." The war of words and the tumult of opinions are as prevalent today as they were in New England during the early 1800s. The names of the "churches" may differ, but the nature of the competition is essentially unchanged. The central issue is the same today as it was in antiquity: "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." (Joshua 24:15).

Thus academic disciplines have assumed the role of religion in the lives of millions of modernists and post modernists. These modern sects now dominate the public power structure through schools and professional organizations that are extensions of university-based disciplines. Their variant "theologies" are fashioned from the respective traditions of scholarship and these "theologies" are debated and defended vigorously and emotionally. The semantics may differ, but the practice is remarkably constant.

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[32]Ibid. p. 2.

[33]Paige Smith *Killing the Spirit* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1990) p. 294.

[34]Garry Wills *Under God: Religion and American Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990) p. 15 states that such assertions are distortions of the facts. In academic circles and consequently among the media it is a common but misleading supposition. Wills tells another story and argues that "it seems careless for scholars to keep misplacing such a large body of people."

John Dewey very candidly discussed the new "Education as a Religion,"[35] and Alfred North Whitehead observed that "the essence of education is that it be religious."[36] To ignore the religious nature and the "theological" power of modern belief systems is to ignore the social reality in which we now live, and to deceive those we educate to live under it. Youth should be free to ask forthrightly, "Which of all these churches is right?" They deserve the opportunity to seek a personal answer to this question. And this search should not be confused by camouflaging some religious belief systems as nonreligious because they have identified themselves as secular.

Impressive campuses dotted with "cathedrals" have been established or conveniently "occupied," as W. B. Riley lamented in the 1920s. He claimed even then that "liberal bandits" had robbed the fundamentalists of billions of dollars of real estate and facilities. "Ninety-nine out of every hundred" dollars spent to construct the great denominational universities, colleges, schools, seminaries, hospitals and publication societies in this country "were given by fundamentalists and filched by modernists." "It took hundreds of years," he said, "to collect this money and construct these institutions. It has taken only a quarter of a century for the liberal bandits to capture them."[37]

Whatever the mode of acquisition, large and small congregations now fill these facilities. Meetings, numerous and regular meetings, are conducted to define, disseminate, and direct the work of these ministries of modern academe. Prospective members are recruited, instructed, and formally accepted into the various orders. This process seems very normal, natural and easy to accept because the "new orders" are not called religions; they are perceived as secular scholarly associations. But as George Sheehan has observed, "Every man is religious. Every man is already acting out his compelling beliefs." "Religion," he says, "is the way you manifest whatever is urgent and imperative in your relationship to yourself and your universe, to your fellow man and to your Creator."[38] In this context,

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[35]John Dewey "Education as a Religion" *The New Republic*, August 1922. p. 64. He also called his pedagogy a "Creed."

[36]Alfred North Whitehead The Aims of Education (New York: Mentor Books, 1952) p. 26.

[37]Walter Lippmann *A Preface to Morals* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1929) p. 31.

[38]George Sheehan *Running and Being* (New York: Warner Books, 1978) p. 65.

scholarship is always a tool in the service of some personal or professional religious order. How could it be otherwise?

Individuals destined for leadership in the various disciplines are carefully prepared. They are screened, tested, and sent on developmental missions of internship, clerkship, and eventual partnership as they are trained for a particular priestly order. Recognition and advancement are ceremoniously bestowed. Loyalty, commitment, and devotion to the order are prescribed and carefully monitored. Once accepted, adherents are expected to be supportive witnesses and valiant defenders of their designated "faith." And all this occurs in a context that James Turner calls "human and worldly"[39] --a context that designates the human race as the primary focus in a universe composed solely of physical matter.

Consequently, it would be an intellectual error to label today's academic and social controversies as purely *secular* and *objective* or as conflicts between the *sacred* and the *secular*. Politicians would call this disinformation. Disputations over creation, birth control, abortion, maturation education, sexual lifestyles, political correctness, academic freedom, women's studies, ecology, life support systems, etc. are the product of different religions contending one with another. To view them otherwise is to become a willing victim of a magnificent deception. It not only distorts the issues, it confuses the people who confront them.

One of the many results of accepting scholarship as a form of religious commitment is that it reveals a major dilemma. Was Walter Lippmann correct when he suggested that "only the universities" can fill "the modern void resulting from [our] emancipation from the ancestral order?"[40]

It has been fashionable in this century to see the university as the new caretaker and expositor of the moral order in society. As Dave Dodson, a student columnist at Berkeley, put it more than twenty years ago, "In a sentence, the University must today be our Church." The rationale for his position is a logical outcome of the historical data described in this paper:

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[39]James Turner *Without God, Without Creed* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985) p. 266.

[40] as quoted by Dave Dodson "The University as Church" *The Daily Californian*, Wednesday April 16, 1969.

> Here at the University where Science and the Humanities can be approached in an integrated fashion, where commitment and understanding can be attained together, and where both culture and critical reason can be explored simultaneously--only here can we achieve our social and even religious salvation. For it is only at the University that a people can acquire the knowledge and motivation prerequisite to the formation of real community.[41]

When one assumes membership in a religion committed to this type of theology conflicts may emerge within the individual and between the different institutions with whom he/she affiliates. Institutions do not readily relinquish their intellectual and moral leadership, nor do we allow them to do so. How does the individual choose which to follow and which to change? Or does one fragment into multiple "moral" or "spiritual" value systems and apply them according to need, ignoring the issue of integrity.

Is the compulsive struggle for so-called "academic freedom" actually a struggle for freedom to apply the tools of scholarship, or is it a struggle for licence to apply them according to the tenents of an order or society one has chosen? Is the question one of freedom, or one of permission to follow a popular rather than a traditional religious belief system? The answer to this question frames many of the moral dilemmas of our day.

Among the "churches" that emerge around scholars a common article of faith is that each of these orders insists on being its own highest court of appeal; its own expertise is the supreme authority in its chartered domain. All who question this authority are pretenders to a throne which holds unquestioned dominion. As scholars build these "churches" unto themselves, they function as laws unto themselves. In this sense they tend to offer a non-unique answer Joshua's question regarding who to serve: "But as for me and my house we will serve ourselves." It seems to me we are in need of a higher common cause. And this sense of need leads me to conclude with the question: To whom or to what does the scholar owe loyalty?

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[41] Dave Dodson *The Daily Californian*, Friday May 29, 1970.